



## An Overview of the Religious Landscape in America

By Annika Schauer

Article 6 of the Constitution, and the First and Fourteenth Amendments have been historically applied to prevent the establishment of a State church, and, in the words of Thomas Jefferson, to build “a wall of separation” between government and religion in the United States. While at first glance, such a “wall” may seem to discourage the growth of personal religious faith, in fact it has had the opposite effect.

The United States has a secular government, but its populace is deeply religious. According to Pew Research and recent Gallup polls, the United States ranks among the most religious of Western nations. According to most major polls, between 75-85 percent of Americans believe in a god or higher power of some kind, and about 65 percent of Americans characterize religion as “very important” in their lives. Compared to European countries where a “State Church” is mandated in the constitution, such as England, Norway, Finland, or Denmark, Americans are two-to-three times more likely to describe religion as a priority. The United States is a statistical outlier among wealthy nations as well; research typically shows an inverse correlation between a nation’s wealth and its number of devoutly religious. The United States is among the world’s wealthiest nations, yet remains as religiously faithful as some of its poorest counterparts.

The demographics of religion as it is practiced in America have been shifting slowly and steadily over the decades. Most immigrants in recent years have been non-European, non-Protestant. Well over a quarter of Americans report that they have made a major religious conversion (such as from Christianity to another faith, or from Catholicism to Protestantism) during their lives. While the United States has heretofore been majority-Protestant, Protestants now account for only 51 percent of the populace, according to Pew Research, and analysts believe that Protestants will become a minority (albeit a sizeable one) in the near future. Another factor in the shifting landscape of American religion is the “seeker culture” that began to manifest in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; each year, fewer of us are remaining in the religions we were born into. Several polls have indicated that between 25-50 percent of Americans will make at least one major religious conversion (such as from Protestantism to Catholicism, or from Christianity to Buddhism) during the course of their lives.

In terms of numbers in a single denomination, Catholicism is by far the most practiced religion in the United States, a number that has held steady in recent decades as many Protestant

denominations have flagged. Nearly a quarter of Americans are Catholics. Of these, nearly half were born in a country outside of the United States, such as Mexico. A recent Landscape Poll conducted by Pew indicates that approximately half of immigrants to the United States practice Catholicism, so the Church’s strength in numbers is apparently fueled by immigration.

Protestantism remains the largest religious category, but “Protestantism” itself is a catchall term for many smaller subgroups reflecting diverse religious worldviews that cannot be neatly categorized. These views range from conservative and evangelical, as typified by the large Southern Baptist Convention, to the more politically liberal “mainline” and liturgical churches such as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church USA, and the Episcopal Church USA. Protestantism also includes far-left wing and far-right wing churches, historically black churches, and a growing number of non-denominational churches.

Other religions are also growing due to immigration. While native-born populations of non-Christians are comparatively small, practice of non-Christian religions is outpacing Christian religions in terms of growth, due to new arrivals from abroad. According to Diana Van Eck’s book, *A New Religious America*, “Islamic centers and mosques, Hindu and Buddhist temples, and meditation centers can be found in virtually every major American metropolitan area.” Even in very small towns, mosques can be found in repurposed storefronts, and Hindu services can be held in private homes, community centers, or even in the local Quaker meeting hall. The United States Military also has a policy of religious diversity and inclusion, as set forth in DOD directive 1300.17. Military chaplaincy includes Hindu, Unitarian, Buddhist, Muslim, and Jewish clergy, in addition to practitioners of a variety of Christian denominations.

Another growing minority in the United States are those who practice no faith at all. About 15 percent of Americans (polls vary on the exact number) report that they are not a member of any religion. Of these, about half report that they believe in some kind of god or higher power, and the other half report that they do not. This group includes atheists and agnostics, as well as those who simply do not have a religious preference. There are also some Americans who practice their faith for cultural or family reasons, who report that they are not believers.

### The American Center

C-49, G Block, B. K. C., Bandra East Mumbai – 400051 Tel: 022-2672-4024  
E-mail: [mumbaipublicaffairs@state.gov](mailto:mumbaipublicaffairs@state.gov); Website: <http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov>  
Office Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Monday through Friday)

### H O L I D A Y S

August 15 - Independence Day  
August 20 - Id-ul-Fitar



# U.S. Elections

## Role of Technology and Social Media

### Digital Video Discussion

featuring

**Colin Delany**

Founder and Chief Editor of  
Epolitics.com

**2** Thursday  
**August** 2012  
**6:30-8:00 PM**



In conversation with

**Anant Gadgil**

Spokesperson  
*Maharashtra Congress*

**Shruti Ganpatye**

Senior Political Correspondent  
*Dainik Divya Marathi*

**Deepak Kanulkar**

Chief Executive Officer  
*Good Relations India*

Learn how communications technology – especially social media – is used as a tool by political parties and candidates in the U.S. to better connect with voters, dispense information, engage in dialogue, build consensus on issues, influence opinion, and motivate them to widely share information among their networks. Also learn how can improved connectivity be used to ensure larger web-fundraising, voter turnout and civic participation in the election process, as well as more free, fair and transparent elections.

**Colin Delany** is founder and chief editor of Epolitics.com, a site that focuses on the tools and tactics of internet politics and online political advocacy. Epolitics.com received the Golden Dot Award as “Best Blog – National Politics” at the 2007 Politics Online Conference, and Delany was a part of DC Fox affiliate WTTG-25’s live coverage of the 2008 presidential election results. Delany also wrote the e-books “Learning from Obama: Lessons for Online Communicators in 2009 and Beyond,” “How Candidates Can Use the Internet to Win in 2010,” and “Online Politics 101: The Tools and Tactics of Online Political Advocacy,” together downloaded from Epolitics.com over 60,000 times.

### Venue:

**U.S. Consulate General**

C-49, G Block, Near Trident Hotel, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (E), Mumbai - 400 051



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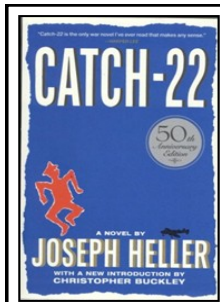
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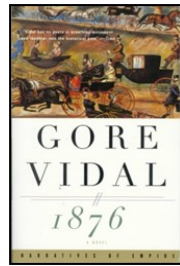
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## NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

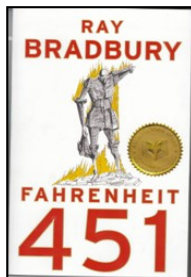
### Revisit Your Old Favorites at the American Library



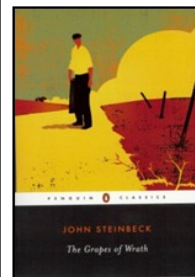
**Catch-22**  
by Joseph Heller.  
Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1955.



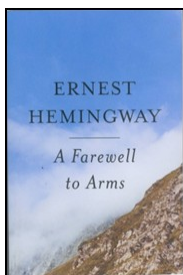
**1876 A Novel: Narratives of Empire**  
by Gore Vidal.  
Vintage International, 1976.



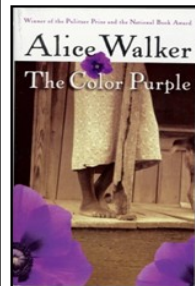
**Fahrenheit 451**  
by Ray Bradbury.  
Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1951.



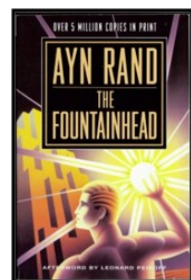
**The Grapes of Wrath**  
by John Steinbeck.  
Penguin Books, 1939



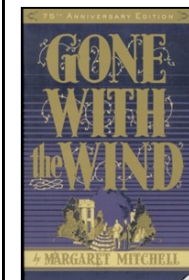
**The Grapes of Wrath**  
by John Steinbeck.  
Penguin Books, 1939.



**The Color Purple**  
by Alice Walker.  
A Harvest Books, 1982



**The Fountainhead**  
by Ayn Rand.  
A Plum Book, 1943.



**Gone with the Wind**  
by Margaret Mitchell.  
Scribner, 1964.

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## WORD FROM THE CENTER

Greetings from the American Center of the U.S. Consulate General! I'd like to share some highlights.

We organized a three-day Consulate-wide outreach trip to

Pune from July 23-25. The trip included Consul General Peter Haas and staff from Public Affairs, Consular, Economic, Foreign Commercial Service, and United States-India Education Foundation. During the visit CG Haas and staff promoted higher education in the U.S. to local colleges, launched the Pune chapter of Visit USA, inaugurated the first American Studies program in Western India, met with potential investors in the U.S., discussed visa issues with American companies, and visited a "green" factory of an American company. CG Haas also met with the 20 American high school students studying Hindi in Pune under the National Strategic Language Initiative. The highlight of the trip was a "Facebook Fan" reception at Hard Rock Cafe in Pune where staff and more than 50 young Pune professionals were able to mingle and get to know each other.

The American Center continued to support and recognize the contributions of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community with a public event on July 24<sup>th</sup> at the Consulate. The event commemorated American poet, essayist and feminist Adrienne Cecile Rich who passed away this year. Some of the seventy participants enacted her poems and engaged in interactive discussions with Dr. Rambhau Badode (professor at Mumbai University and teacher of Rich's works), Rajasvini Bhansali (U.S. based published poet & essayist, and a student of Rich), and Shobhana Kumar (Mumbai based activist and proprietor of Queer-Ink).

The July Mumbai Mondays talk on "The Indian Diaspora in the United States" was so popular that the presenter was asked to address 40 students from St. Andrew's College, Department of Sociology and History on July 26<sup>th</sup> as part of an outreach orientation organized by our American Library. And the presentation will be repeated later in the year at the Rotary Club. Don't miss your chance to meet a member of the Consulate community and partake in such lively discussions. Our August Mumbai Mondays on "America's Kaleidoscopic and Rapidly Changing Religious Landscape," promises to be just as exciting. Please note that it will be on the fourth and last Monday (27<sup>th</sup>) of August as the U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai will be closed on Monday, August 20<sup>th</sup> in observation of Ramzan Id.

On August 1, the Consulate held its annual Iftaar in the atrium of its new Consulate building. The Iftaar highlighted the religious diversity of Mumbai with the 90 attendees representing all faiths. Along with senior Muslim leaders, representatives from the Hindu, Parsi, and Catholic faiths reflected on what Ramadan meant to them during the opening remarks.

And lastly, we deployed three important videos on our Facebook and Twitter pages – one on the visa application process in Mumbai: - [Click Here](#) another on the American Library - [Click Here](#) and a Visit America video - [Click Here](#) . Check them out!

Sincerely,

Swati  
Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer



Theme of the month

**Religious Diversity / Multiculturalism**

*Saturday*  
**FILM SCREENINGS**

**August 4**  
**In America** 2002 105 mins  
An Irish immigrant family adjusts to life in the United States.

**August 18**  
**Crash** 2004 112 mins  
Los Angeles citizens with vastly separate lives collide in interweaving stories of race, loss and redemption.

**August 11**  
**The Book of Eli** 2010 118 mins  
A post-apocalyptic tale, in which a lone man fights his way across America in order to protect a sacred book that holds the secrets to saving humankind.

**August 25**  
**Namesake** 2006 122 mins  
American-born Gogol, the son of Indian immigrants, wants to fit in among his fellow New Yorkers, despite his family's unwillingness to let go of their traditional ways.

**Screening will start at 2:30 p.m.**



**Free and open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis.**

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## Alumni Highlights



Jyoti Shukla, and alumna of the International Visitor Leadership Program, has switched lanes from journalism to stock market technical analysis, and has established her own consulting/technical analysis services in strategic partnership with Reliable Investments, a sub-brokerage arm of India's top financial services house, Motilal Oswal Securities Ltd. She has been an active trader for the last 10 years and her journalistic background gave her a unique advantage of understanding how news drives stock markets. Her nascent website, [www.cheers2trade.com](http://www.cheers2trade.com) has been so popular among American readers that it receives 30 percent hits from North America. Due to the site's popularity, she started covering stock markets around the clock, starting from Asian markets, to Indian markets, European markets, and ending with U.S. markets. Ms. Shukla says that, "If it was not for the IVLP and its unique talent spotting procedure, I would never have been exposed to the other side of the world and this life-changing career change would never have happened in my life."



On June 29, 2012 twenty alumni of the International Visitor Leadership Program, Youth Exchange and Study, Study of U.S. Institutes, and other USG exchange programs took part in an Alumni Theater Arts Workshop in Mumbai. The workshop was led by professional actor and director Sukhesh Arora. The American Center, Mumbai engaged with a vibrant and diverse group of alumni and provided participants across different exchange programs the opportunity to network and hone their leadership and communication skills by using Sukhesh's guidance in theater arts and his game-based approach to the workshop.

**If you are an alumna of a United States exchange program and have received special recognition, please send a write-up with 2-3 photos to [mumbaipublicaffairs@state.gov](mailto:mumbaipublicaffairs@state.gov). You could be featured in future e-bulletins!**



*In Memoriam:*

*Ms. Eva Doctor*

*11/20/1953 - 7/26/2012*

We are very sorry to inform our readers of the sad demise of our dear friend and colleague, Eva Doctor. I have been proud to call Eva my friend since August 2000, when I arrived in Mumbai, my first time in India, knowing very little but eager to learn. She helped me learn and understand things, and was always available to answer my questions, as silly as they might have been. She took an interest in my family, and loved to come see our dogs, J and Jasmine. She watched my children grow from babies to teenagers. She consistently remembered my birthday and my wedding anniversary, even in the years I was gone from Mumbai. She was truly a special person, who touched thousands during her 26 year career with the American Center of the U.S. Consulate General.

Many of you may also remember Ruby, our American Center cat who passed away last year, who was Eva's special protégé. As much as I miss Eva, it comforts me to fondly picture Eva and Ruby together once again. Eva, you will never be forgotten.

Anne E. Grimes

Director, American Center and Public Affairs Officer

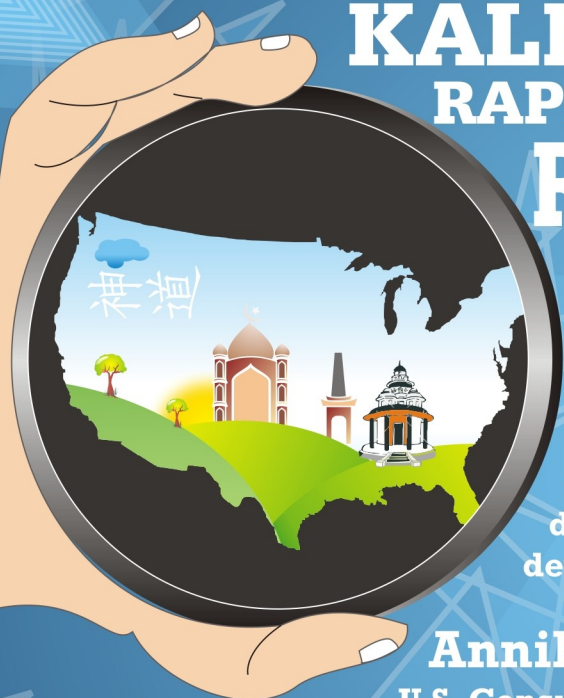
E-Bulletin Editor:  
**Swati Patel**

Designed by:  
**Milburn Fernandes**



# MUMBAI MONDAYS

## AMERICA'S KALEIDOSCOPIC and RAPIDLY CHANGING RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE



Please join us at the U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai, for an engaging discussion on "America's Kaleidoscopic and Rapidly Changing Religious Landscape." Learn how faith has been shaped by U.S. law, immigration patterns and cultural trends in America. Discover how religious practice coexists with an explicitly secular government, distinguishing the United States as one of the most religiously devout—and diverse—nations in the Western world.

**Annika Schauer** is a Consular Officer currently serving at U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai. In 2010, she researched and drafted significant portions of the International Religious Freedom Report, published annually by the U.S. Department of State. In her last tour as Human Rights Officer in Sudan, she worked closely with high-level U.S. and local government officials and advocacy groups on issues pertaining to religious freedom. Annika is a veteran of the U.S. Navy and studied Fine Arts/Printmaking at San Diego State University. She has been in Mumbai for one year, and enjoys listening to the Indian jazz scene, looking at the work of local artists, and hanging out at Mahalaxmi Race Course in her free time.

### Venue:

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Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (E), Mumbai - 400 051

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# August 27<sup>2012</sup> at 6:00 p.m.